

Behavioral Health Services (BHS) - Provider Information Notice

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| To: | BHS Contracted Substance Use Disorder Service Providers | April 29, 2020 |
| From: | Behavioral Health Services | |
| Cc: | Sent on behalf of Teresa (Terri) Kang, QM Supervisor, BHS | |
| Topic(s): | Drug Medi-Cal Organized Delivery System (DMC-ODS) billable and non-billable activities, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) | |
| Title | DMC-ODS Billable and Non-Billable Activities During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency | |

County of San Diego Behavioral Health Services (BHS) acknowledges the ongoing efforts of Substance Use Disorder (SUD) providers to ensure clients are receiving medically necessary care while protecting the safety of clients and staff during the COVID-19 public health emergency. This includes providing and documenting services appropriately under new and sometimes evolving expectations. In response to requests from providers for guidance, this memo serves to clarify activities that are billable if appropriately documented, as well as services that are never billable for DMC-ODS clients.

Potentially Billable Activities

- **Telephone calls to social workers or other social service providers to attempt to re-engage clients who have lost contact with the program.**
 - These telephone conversations are billable as case management if related to assisting the client in meeting their treatment goals.
- **Telephone or telehealth contacts made within 30 days after a client is discharged from the program or within 30 days before the client is admitted to the program for the purpose of facilitating transition.**
 - Case management and care coordination, including warm handoffs for clients transitioning out of or into a treatment program, are billable as Transitional Care Services. Please see the QM Memo on [Transitional Care Services](#) on the Optum website for more information.
- **Assisting clients in accessing services that are provided through telehealth.**
 - Time spent assisting a client in accessing and maintaining a telehealth session may be included in the documented service time.
- **Contact with clients enrolled in outpatient services to touch base on the client's well-being between formal, scheduled counseling sessions.**
 - Brief phone calls with a client addressing treatment and recovery needs between planned sessions are potentially billable as counseling, so long as the provider is operating within their professional scope of practice. The documentation should include the purpose and outcome of the discussion.

Never Billable Activities

- Leaving voicemail messages for clients, social workers, probation/parole officers, or others
- Email reminders to clients regarding intakes or scheduled treatment sessions
- Time spent by a program installing or trouble-shooting functionality of telehealth equipment

As a reminder, telehealth is not a distinct service, but an allowable mechanism to provide clinical services. The standard of care and service provided is the same whether the patient is seen in-person, by telephone, or through telehealth.

Please direct questions to QIMatters.HHSA@sdcounty.ca.gov or contact your COR. More information on COVID-19 can be found on the [County of San Diego COVID-19 webpage](#), and resources and communications specific to BHS providers can be found on the [COVID-19 BHS Provider Resources webpage](#).